

## **Glamorgan Archives**

### **Annual Report 2022**

Glamorgan Archives is the archive service for the historic counties of Mid and South Glamorgan, serving the local authorities of Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Vale of Glamorgan.

#### **Vision**

The vision for the service is to collect, preserve and share the documentary heritage of the historic county of Glamorgan (incorporating Mid and South Glamorgan, as well as some records for West Glamorgan) for and with everyone.

#### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the service is to safeguard and develop the collections, whilst also making them as widely accessible as possible in order to engage, educate and empower all those who come into contact with them, now and in the future. The service will take a proactive and inclusive approach to enhancing the collection and its access by addressing cataloguing and conservation backlogs, developing a comprehensive solution for digital preservation and embracing new and innovative approaches for engagement and access to the collections in an increasingly digital world.

## **Welcome to the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Report from Glamorgan Archives covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022**

### **Introduction**

This is the first full year that the service has been open since the pandemic and, whilst there are some practices that have been altered since that time, things are largely back to normal. It has proved to be a busy and productive year, as the table of statistics below shows. The search-room has been busy, with very high demand for places at times over the year. The updated procedure means that people are asked to book in advance and notify the staff what they would like to see so that a few items can be got out for each searcher in advance. This has proved popular amongst researchers as it means they can start work as soon as they arrive, thus maximising their time in the search-room.

2022 saw Carmarthenshire Archives move their collections to their newly completed building in Carmarthen. A large proportion of their collections had been stored at Glamorgan Archives for over five years, and it was very pleasing to see their collections finally return home and become fully accessible again.

As well as visitors on-site gradually increasing again, the amount of remote enquiries has remained high as people continue to request information from a distance away making use of the remote enquiry service and digitisation service.

In addition to utilising the high-resolution camera system (mentioned in last year's report) for high-quality digitisation of collections held in the Archives for user requests, the service has also continued to work on digitisation of whole series of records alongside commercial suppliers. Over the course of the year, more of our collections have launched on Ancestry, and work has continued on capturing colour, high-resolution images from the Diocese of Llandaff parish registers that are held.

Work to enable Glamorgan Archives to be able to manage the preservation of born-digital records has continued over the course of the year, both within the service and as part of a Wales-wide consortium. This links with several of the improvement requirements that were laid out within the service's Archives Accreditation report from November 2021. Improvements in this area have included the acquisition of hardware for digital preservation, thanks to Welsh Government and the National Library of Wales, and moving towards software to assist with managing born-digital material.

Over the last six years, Glamorgan Archives has been part of the Cultural Ambition programme managed by Creative and Cultural Skills. The programme featured placements for young people in cultural heritage organisations across Wales, like archives and museums. Over the course of the programme, Glamorgan Archives hosted placements for five young people, with the last one of those concluding in 2022. Some of the young people that were hosted have gone on to work or further education in cultural heritage and the programme was a very successful initiative.

In June, the Archives were pleased to welcome Dawn Bowden MS, Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, to the building in conjunction with International Archives Day. She was introduced to the work of archives through a behind the scenes tour and viewed a selection of documents from the collection.

## In Numbers

Number of Visitors	2,270 (including 29 group visits)
Number of documents produced	7,031 (including items produced by staff for research and digitisation)
Remote enquiries	4,207
Attendance at events and engagement with staff	759
Website Hits	32,103
Increased followers on social media	Twitter—254 Facebook—365 Instagram—141 Biggest reach— 19,005 on Twitter (July 2022)

### Outreach

The Archives continues to benefit massively from the ongoing work of the bank of volunteers who continue to devote their own time to the service and the collections that are held. It is no exaggeration to say that the service could not function without them. Whilst some activities were curtailed during the pandemic, the reopening of the service allowed for a re-evaluation of the way in which the service manages the volunteer programme so that not as many people are now accommodated at once, and contributions are managed on a rota basis. Over the course of the year, a number of projects have continued including indexing crew lists, indexing the Merthyr Tydfil Union admission and discharge registers, producing a finding aid for the Crawshay diaries, and transcribing the Leversuch family correspondence, and the cleaning of National Coal Board volumes, amongst many other things.

In addition to the normal volunteering programme run from the office, the service has also been part of the Crowd Cymru digital volunteering project, working alongside Gwent Archives and Cardiff University Special Collections and Archives. This project (which will run until November 2023) allows people to transcribe, index and tag archival material from their own homes using a crowd-sourcing platform developed by the National Library of Wales.

The schedule of talks and visits has been busy over the course of 2022. Talks included 'Cardiff Arms Park: The Early Years' by David Allen, 'The Wales Women's Rights Committee' by Dr Rachel Lock-Lewis, 'Local History and the Royal Commission's Archive: Exploring Glamorgan in Six Sites' by Rhodri Lewis, 'Railway Work, Life and Death in South Wales (& beyond) before 1939' by Dr Mike Esbester and the first in-person talk since the pandemic: 'Edging the City' by Peter Finch.

Group visits have now resumed following the pandemic and the Archives were pleased to welcome groups from a range of organisations from across the area. Some of those who visited were Cardiff Council's Tenants' Participation Service, Cardiff People First, the Rugby Memorabilia Society and the Jewish History Association of South Wales. Glamorgan Family History Society Cardiff Branch and Grangetown Local History Society continue to use our meeting room for their regular meetings.

School visits have also resumed and the service has worked with pupils from Ysgol Bro Edern, Adamsdown Primary Investigators, Victoria Primary Penarth, and Albany Primary School looking at a range of different topics from local history through to World War One.

Visits and sessions from Higher and Further Education establishments from across the area have also continued. As always, we are pleased to be able to work with Cardiff University across a range of departments (including Conservation, Welsh, and History), as well as Cardiff Metropolitan University Creative Writing students.

The service was also very pleased to be able to host the first 'Open Doors' event since 2019 with building tours being held throughout the day.

The 'Glamorgan's Blood' touring exhibition, which was developed as part of the Wellcome Trust funded project of the same name in 2019, started touring libraries during the year. The tour had been due to start in 2020 but was hugely impacted by the pandemic. Two years later, that tour has been able to start with visits to Cynon Valley Museum and Pontypridd Library. The exhibition will continue to tour venues around the area throughout 2023 and is also available to view online through the Glamorgan Archives website.

The Archives' social media accounts (on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram) have continued to grow steadily over the course of the year, as can be seen by the figures in the table above. One of the very successful initiatives this year has been work that has been done alongside People's Collection Wales and a number of other archive services from across Wales on a pilot project to cross promote social media content. This has meant working on a number of themes across collections and PCW using paid promotion to see what impact can be made on different platforms.

The service was very pleased to be able to work with the Archives and Records Council Wales (ARCW) on the development of two films highlighting the work of archives across Wales. The films looked in particular at women's history and LGBTQ+ history and are available to view on YouTube.

The @PlymouthMaps social media account launched on Twitter in June. Created by two Cardiff University history placement students, the account highlighted content from the Plymouth Estate Surveys following the

completion of the successful National MCT-funded conservation project. The students put together a series of daily posts throughout the month highlighting content from the survey volumes and what they can tell us about local history and topography, along with their artistic merit.

Glamorgan Archives has continued to work alongside a wide range of partners over the course of the year on their own projects as well as Glamorgan Archives' own projects. Partners over the course of the year have included the CAER Heritage project, Heritage and Cultural Exchange, Welsh Gifted and Black, Cardiff People First, Vale People First, the Innovate Trust, The Wallich, Kiran Cymru and The National Archives, amongst others. Some of those projects continue into 2023.

### **Conservation**

Work on the NMCT-funded project to conserve the Plymouth Estate plans was concluded during the year. The project had been much delayed because of the pandemic, but the end result of the work is beautiful. The work involved taking apart the existing binding on the volumes to enable cleaning, repair and digitisation of each plan before the volumes were re-bound and boxed.

Work was also completed on conservation commissioned by the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, through their NMCT-funded project. This was only one of several different externally commissioned pieces of work completed in Conservation over the course of the year, including work for Glamorgan Cricket Club, Rhondda Cynon Taf Heritage Services and Barry War Museum, amongst others.

The Conservation team have continued to support a range of students from Cardiff University undertaking placements within the Studio, some short-term and others long-term. The students have contributed to a wide range of projects, from the external commissions through to remedial repairs undertaken on the core collections. Their contribution is greatly appreciated in enabling more work to be done, whilst they are trained in paper conservation techniques.

Thanks to funding from ARCW, one of the pieces of work that was undertaken during the year was a Preservation Assessment Survey on a sample of the core collection. This followed up surveys that had been conducted in 2001 and 2011, thus giving useful trend data from before the Archives moved to the current building, afterwards and ten years into the new building. This kind of data about the collection informs planning for projects and priorities for core work.

One of the key pieces of equipment within Glamorgan Archives is the box-making machine, that was purchased to ensure all loose volumes and other material was boxed prior to the move to the new building. This is now used to box all new collections as they are received, but also to make boxes for other organisations. A large number of box-making orders were received during the year, meaning that the box-maker was kept very busy indeed!

### **Collections**

The service held two successful Collections Weeks during the year, in June and November. These weeks are essential for staff to have time to deal with larger accessions and make real progress with collections tasks that otherwise would not get done due to the normal day-to-day pressures on the service. This year, staff continued with stocktaking the strongrooms to help locate mis-placed items, as well as reviewing the Butetown History and Arts Centre collection deposited by the Heritage and Cultural Exchange. They also catalogued two large collections: the records of the South Wales Police Authority and the records of the New Theatre, Cardiff.

The Glamorgan Archivist is representing colleagues from across Wales on a working group looking at the future retention of records of adopted and care-experienced people. Funding has been put together from The National Archives and Welsh Government, as well as contributions from archive services across England and Wales to enable consultants to be appointed to scope the amount of collections spread between national and regional agencies plus local authorities, to enable informed decisions about the long-term retention of these collections to be made.

Work has continued behind the scenes on the development of a new catalogue for collections. This includes the staff database as well as a new public front-end. The new catalogue will be launched during 2023.

Many new accessions have been received over the course of the year, encompassing a wide range of different areas of collecting. In total, 150 new deposits were received. Some of the highlights of that newly accessioned material include:

- A broad range of ecclesiastical and nonconformist records including Church in Wales parishes (such as Llandough-juxta-Penarth with Leckwith, Pwllgwaun, Llanddewi Rhondda and Penarth, etc.), records for a number of different Methodist churches from across the area (in particular marriage registers), several United Reformed Churches (such as Minster Road and Roath Park, Cardiff) and Congregational Churches, Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, Maesteg, etc.
- A number of different deposits of material from schools from across the area, including photographs and other school records. This included Barry High Street Girls' School, Abercedin School, Tonysguboriau School, Graigddu Infants School, Rhondda County School for Girls Porth, Ogmore Comprehensive School, etc.
- Additional records were received to supplement some existing collections. This included additional Associated British Ports photographs from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and additional material on Penarth Civic Society, amongst others.
- Collections that highlight the industrial heritage of the area are noticeable amongst this year's new deposits. For example, there are Cardiff Tram Plans, c1924-c1968; Records of the Lan Gas Coal Company, Brynceithin, C20th; Plans of seams and workings from Bute Colliery, Treherbert, C20th; files relating to the development of Nantgarw Colliery, 1940s-1960s; Mineral Estates Records and Plans from the Land Valuer for Wales, 1870-1960s; Taff Vale Railway Company records, C19th-C20th, etc.
- Women's Archive Wales deposited records from the South Wales Branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1960s-2009.
- Estate material received included: Wenvoe Castle Estate papers, 1824-1999; photographs of performances held at Dyffryn Gardens to celebrate the Festival of Britain in 1951; as well as a number of small deposits.
- Records of local societies deposited included: Ogmore Valley Local History and Heritage Society journals and local collected records, 1864-2021; Cowbridge History Society records, C19th-C20th; Penygraig and District Historical Society records, C19th-C20th; records of Eglwys Newydd Women's Institute, 2015-2022; Grangetown Local History Society collected records, etc.

- A number of business collections have been received including the records of the Bird family business of Cowbridge, c1900-c2010; records of Tynewydd Dairy Farms Ltd of Hirwaun, 1907-1940; South Wales Police Authority records, c1967-2012, etc.
- As usual, there have been a large number of family and personal collections received. These include: papers from Hiram Davies of Maesteg, c1895-2014 including his service in World War One; papers from Brian Jarrett of Cardiff, c1953-2010 including records of the Welsh Counties Car Club; records of the Ireland family, C20th; papers of the Edwards, Harrap, Ward, Llewellyn, Geldard, Griffiths and Walker families, C19th-C20th; Robert Edward John Tanner of Penarth papers relating to World War One; etc.
- There have, of course, also been collections taken in from our constituent local authorities (including Council records and other related material) and associated bodies, such as the Coroner, Town Councils, Community Councils, etc. There have also been political papers from some of the local political party branches.
- An interesting item was a poster promoting an Aberfan Disaster Fund appeal organised by The Jersey Welsh Society in 1966.
- One significant collection received this year was the Butetown History and Arts Centre collection. Whilst this collection had been stored in the Archives for a number of years, it had not been formally deposited until now. The collection encompasses material that tells stories from the rich heritage of Butetown and Tiger Bay. There are a broad range of photographs in the collection, as well as documentary sources. Work is already underway, in conjunction with Heritage and Cultural Exchange (the depositor), to catalogue and share material from the collection.
- Another significant collection included scrapbooks, programmes, photograph albums and files of papers relating to the New Theatre, Cardiff, c1910s-2005.

Laura Cotton

Glamorgan Archivist